



United States Department of Agriculture

Sunnycrest Farm: Irrigating Sustainably to Improve Farm's Future

By Brianna Belisle, NRCS Pathways Intern

Photos by Brianna Belisle and Keri Neal



Sunnycrest Farm began in 1943 and was owned by Alfred Connor, the grandfather of the current owner, Danny Hicks III. Over three generations, the farm has grown to produce a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables on 60 acres of conservation farmland. Sunnycrest Farm began as a way to make extra money during the summer months back in 1943 and since then has changed into a lifestyle for the Hicks family. Today, Danny Hicks emphasizes the importance of knowing who your farmer is and where your food comes from, by urging customers to enjoy the fields during pick-your-own (PYO) season. The Hicks family enjoys seeing children learning about their food first hand when picking all sorts of berries, grapes, apples and pumpkins fresh off the bush, vine and tree at the farm.

Danny Hicks prides himself in his work on the farm, but knows that a farm cannot manage itself without the help from his skilled farm workers. Over the years, the Hicks family has practiced equal opportunity on their farm, employing many workers from disadvantaged countries. Sunnycrest Farm believes that diversity will not only help the farm grow culturally but, will bring new ideas to improve the farming methods.

Since 2002, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) have worked with Sunnycrest Farm to help improve crop production and energy efficiency. NRCS has helped fund microirrigation projects, nutrient and pest management projects, drilled wells, and a high tunnel. However, with the past few years of drought conditions in the Northeast, farming has been hard on everyone's crop yields including Sunnycrest Farm. Sunnycrest Farm has seen the effects that drought can cause in fruit and vegetable yields in the past and hopes that, with the help of the FSA and NRCS, crop yields will begin to rise again.





United States Department of Agriculture



This spring through fall, the Hicks family looks forward to a new well under the drought management program through FSA, as well as a water pipeline, microirrigation, and soil moisture meters from NRCS. The pipeline will bring water from the well through and behind the apple orchard where the microirrigation will be distributed through all of the eastern fields. This will help maintain soil moisture for the blueberries, apples, and strawberries. Soil moisture meters will also be installed to monitor the depth of moisture in the soil. These monitors are designed to help conserve water as well as to ensure that the plants have enough moisture to sustain the hot summers.

With the help of the NRCS and FSA, the Hicks family will receive financial assistance for the installation of the well, pipeline, microirrigation and soil moisture meters. Without the help of the NRCS and FSA the Hicks Family may have never been able to afford this upgrade to their farm.

If you are interested in picking your own fresh fruit or supporting Sunnycrest Farm's market, consider visiting their farm at 59 High Range Rd. Londonderry, NH. Sunnycrest also has a hotline number that you can call to learn more about their seasonal crop availability at (603)432-9652.

